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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 25, 1999

VOL. 123

No. 41

the
**Unfinished
Task**
1999
Loving the Lost

Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and
International Mission Study
November 28-December 5, 1999
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
Offering goal: \$125 million

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'Poorest people' in world hearing Gospel

BHUBANESWAR, India (BP) — As Calvin Fox surveys his surroundings among the Kui people of India, he sees reddish-purple paint smeared on the heads of cattle, a sign that those animals have undergone a temple ritual to protect them and make them more productive.

He sees sacrifices left alongside a road or under a tree where a worshiper believes a spirit lives. He sees spirit-guard pouches tied around the waists of small children. He sees Hindu temples everywhere he looks — in the towns, in the forest, and even in the fields. All these things tell Calvin that these people belong to a different god.

None of these signs connotes the effects of lostness to him quite as much as the despair he sees in the face of the Kui, who have long practiced Hinduism. "The people see no way out of a very bad situation, either in this life or in the life to come," he says. "This causes them to give up and simply exist from one day to the next, devoid of the joy that Christ could give."

Physically, the Kui have real cause for hopelessness, Fox says. Outsiders who once ruled the Kui's homeland in eastern India cut their forest and devastated much of their best land.

"The Kui are left with much of their ecology in ruin. Most of the forest is gone now," he says. "The animals and fish the Kui depend on for food are gone. The people, the livestock and the land are in poor condition. The housing is bad, sanitation is terrible, infant mortality is very high, 85% of the people carry the malaria virus in their blood. In short, things have gone from bad to worse for the last 50 years."

The 1.5 million Kui "are some of the poorest people in the world, and there is no way for them to go except down unless God steps in," he says.

Among Kui who are part of the Father's family, however, Fox notices a radical attitude shift about their living conditions.

"They begin to believe that their lives are going to improve," he explains. "Often Christians suffer more than the lost, but it is the way the Christians bear their suffering that makes the difference. The most striking difference is that Christians do not fear death."

Fox serves among the Kui to provide them tangible reason



SAVING LIVES — Learning easy and inexpensive ways to plant pumpkin and tree seedlings has improved, and even saved lives among India's Kui people. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions helps the Asian Rural Life Development Center make a spiritual as well as physical difference in lives in this low-caste people group. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)

for optimism. As a farmer trained in agriculture, he is a consultant to the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation training center in India's Khond Hills in the state of Orissa. He teaches the Kui the basics in agriculture because of their low farm production.

"The Kui have named one season of the year 'hunger,'" he says. "Hunger has been a part of the Kui's life and history from as far back as their ancient stories go."

The Kui's greatest physical need is for more and better-quality food.

"A balanced diet would take care of most of the physical problems the Kui face," he says. Diarrhea and dysentery are the biggest killers of the children; 318 out of every 1,000 children born die before they reach age five.

To help the people, Fox teaches them a new way to plant tree seedlings and to germinate bamboo that is easy and inexpensive. As a result, the government has recognized his institute at all levels as a scientific agricultural institution that contributes significantly to the Indian economy.

Two years ago, some government people wanted his group out of the country. Today, because of his group's work with pulpwood trees, bamboo and land restoration, the same people are "taking steps to make sure that we feel welcome in India and that they want us to stay for as long as we like," he says.

Because the Kui often hesitate to act once a concept is presented, Fox is challenged to move at their slower pace. "The Kui have many problems, physical and spiritual, that I know how to solve, but it takes a long time to introduce new ideas," he says.

Trainees at the center also learn the Bible from Khond Baptist teachers — and how to teach it effectively in the Kui's story-loving culture through the chronological Bible storying method. About 88% of the Kui women and 65% of the men cannot read, so the storying method is invaluable.

"When people realize who God is and what he is doing in this world, they are impressed. When they realize that they are separated from God because of their sin and that God hates sin, they become concerned. When they learn that God will accept Jesus' death as a substitute for their death, they usually accept Christ," he says.

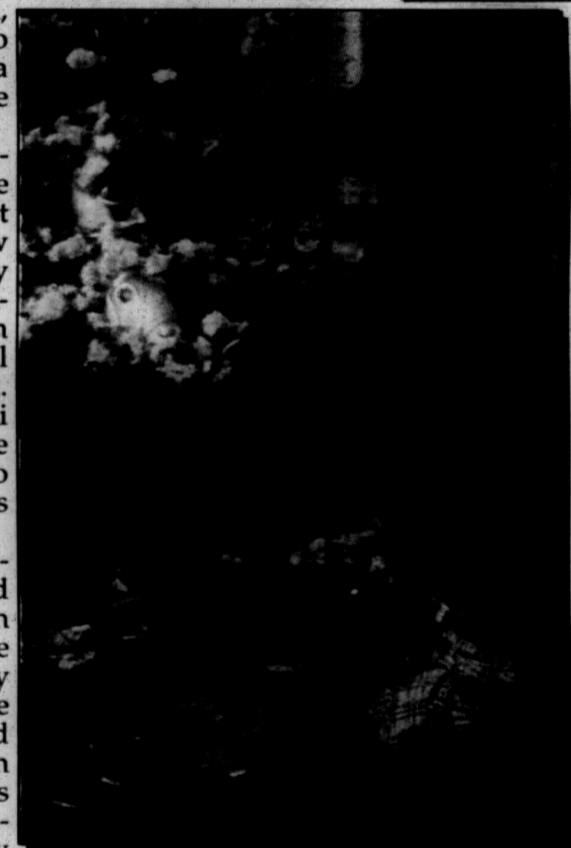
An average of six new groups of God's people are being started every month, a trend that has

occurred for the past three years, with no sign of it slowing, he says. Several priests of the majority religion have come into the family.

Goals for the near future include to finish production of cassette tapes containing 60 of the most important stories from the Bible, training 2,000 church members to tell nine more stories and training 200 farmers in pulpwood and bamboo production and summer gardens.

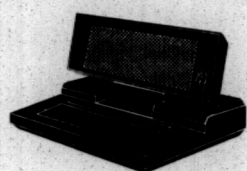
Another goal the Holy Spirit has led Fox to claim: the need for about 10 more acres of land — six acres to set up a nursery system to mass-produce fruit trees, timber trees and vegetable seedlings and four acres to enlarge the training center to double the number of people who can be trained to make their hilly areas productive, he says.

He longs for the day when the generosity of every member of this giving, magnanimous people group stems from hearts that know Christ's love.



DESPAIRING — Sacrifices at Hindu temples don't reveal the lostness of India's Kui people nearly as well as the despair in their eyes, says Southern Baptist Calvin Fox, who works with the Asian Rural Life Development Center. Agriculture and Bible teaching programs at the center, however, are helping thousands of Kui improve both their physical and spiritual lives. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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VOLUME 123 NUMBER 41
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date.

The legacy of the Heavenly Book Visitor

Charlotte Diggs Moon was born into the rarefied Virginia aristocracy at her family's Albermarle County estate on December 17, 1840. She died a pauper's death 72 years later, thousands of miles from home and a lifetime away from her privileged early life.

Those are the cold, textbook facts. We all have a beginning and an end on this earth, but it's what we do in between that counts for eternity. "Lottie," as she came to be called, understood that.

In 1858, God moved in her life and she accepted Christ as Lord while attending First Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Va.

God moved again in her life in 1873, when she requested and against all odds received her missionary appointment from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB), now known as the International Mission Board. She was one of the first single women chosen for Southern Baptist missionary service.

Lottie set sail for China in September of that year and by December had settled in the northern town of Tengchow, where she lived for the next 40 years.

She devoted herself to evangelistic work among the women and children of the surrounding area, telling all who would listen about the "true God," giving away books, and teaching those who couldn't read the books.

Lottie was rejected many times and earned the nickname of "Devil Old Woman," but her persistence never faded.

She wrote to friends in the United States, "I wish I had a thousand lives that I might give them to the women of China!"

Lottie's love for the Bible and for the Chinese people became legendary in the villages around Tengchow, and opposition to her work eventually faded.

Then one day as she moved among the people with her Bible, she heard some refer to her as the "Heavenly Book Visitor." The name stuck with villagers.

In Lottie's day, China suffered almost constant internal political and military turmoil, with outside powers also attempting to exert their influence. Still, Lottie fervently continued her work.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 ignited a famine that soon spread through the countryside and foreshadowed fateful events to come in Lottie's life.

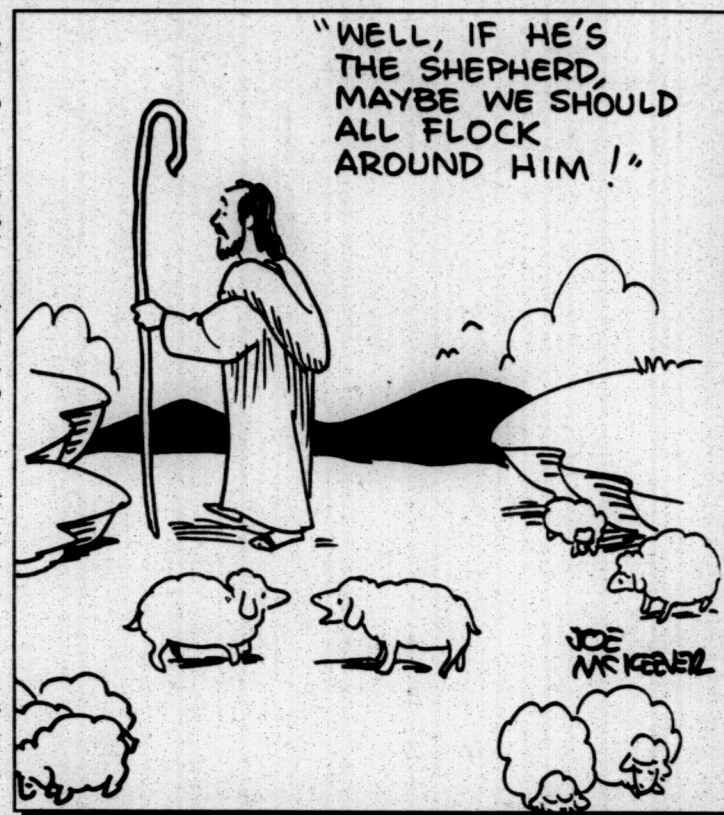
Desperate to help the starving people around whom God had called her to build her life and ministry, Lottie withdrew her personal savings and used it to feed the hungry.

When that money ran out, she used virtually all her meager salary to buy food for others — often failing to retain enough for herself.

She collapsed five days before her seventy-second birthday, her health broken and her 4'11" frame nearly decimated. Years of personal sacrifice had taken its toll.

Lottie died of starvation on Christmas eve, 1912, in the harbor of Kobe, Japan, on a ship that was taking her to America. The world took little note of her life and death, but she changed Southern Baptists and China forever.

Many sad events have transpired in Lottie's China since she came home, but



God will yet prevail in that nation of soft-spoken, humble people.

A marble gravestone in a small Virginia cemetery carries Lottie's name, as does the greatest international missions offering in Christianity.

On that gravestone is the simple phrase, "Faithful unto death."

God permit that those words, bought at so great a price by the Heavenly Book Visitor, should also mark our own Christian service.

Originally published on December 5, 1996.

EDITOR'S NOTE: During *The Week of Prayer for International Missions and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering*, Nov. 28 - Dec. 5, Southern Baptist congregations across the country will focus their prayers, thoughts and gifts on the cause of extending God's kingdom around the world.

God is at work in unprecedented ways to win and disciple the nations and complete the unfinished task of the Great Commission. Nations and people groups previously unreached are being penetrated with the gospel. The spiritual darkness is being dispelled. As our witness extends to the ends of the earth, churches are planted with a passion that results in church-planting movements — but it begins with love for those who are lost.

The cry of the people who don't yet know God has provided a Savior is that of the disciples on the storm-tossed sea, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Do we care that 1.7 billion people haven't yet heard the gospel? Do we care that multitudes locked in bondage to hopeless religious traditions are bound for hell?

Before Jesus commanded us to "go," he commanded us to love the Lord our God and our neighbor as ourselves. Then he explained that our "neighbor" isn't necessarily someone like us, but includes those who are ethnically different. We cannot truly profess to love God without loving others.

GUEST OPINION:



How much do we love Jesus?

By Jerry Rankin, president
International Mission Board

If we are to be faithful and obedient in reaching the nations, we must not be motivated by guilt or obligation, but by our love for the lost and desire for them to know our God, who alone is worthy of their praise and worship. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV), "Christ's love compels us."

Loving the lost means a heart of sorrow for those who do not know Jesus. We must see

them as God sees them — alienated from God, without hope, wandering as sheep without a shepherd. Our hearts should be as broken and grieved as God's heart is for a lost world.

Loving the lost also means a life of sacrifice. John 3:16 (KJV) tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave." Jesus said in John 15:13 (NASB), "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his

friends." Love means to devote yourself to the needs, the welfare, and the happiness of the beloved. If we love the lost, we will give ourselves to them.

The opposite of love is to live for yourself. All peoples of the world could hear the gospel if more of us were willing to give our lives in sacrificial service rather than hold onto our own plans and desires. If more Christians sacrifice time to pray for the nations and give sacrificially of their accumulated wealth, the Great Commission can be fulfilled. God gave his only Son as a sacrifice. What are we willing to give?

Finally, loving the lost becomes a means of salvation for the multitudes. When we are motivated by a broken heart for the lost and are willing to sacrifice our money and our lives to share the gospel to the ends of the earth, we become the means through which the lost can find salvation in Jesus Christ.

After his resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" When he said yes, Jesus responded, "Feed my sheep."

Jesus is asking us, "Do you love me?" If we can say yes, surely he is saying, "Then love the lost, feed them with the gospel; be my witnesses... to the uttermost ends of the earth."

Jerry Rankin is a Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton.

The Unfinished Task 1999

Week of Prayer for International Missions
and
International Mission Study

November 28-December 5, 1999

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal \$125 million

Missionaries contending for lost in Africa

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (BP) — The West African pastor and his family were frantic at a nephew's disappearance. Finally, after much searching for him, the young man was found dead. His throat had been slit, and all of his internal organs had been cut out — offered as a sacrifice to the practice of animism.

This tragic story of lostness is not uncommon among West Africans — even in Abidjan, considered to be one of the most modern cities in the area, says Leah McGuire (not her real name), a Baptist missionary who works in the region.

Although most of the people in Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Liberia — the area on which McGuire and her husband, Tom, concentrate — claim to be Muslim, they are actually practicing folk Islam, a mix of Islamic and animistic beliefs, she says. Animism is the practice of worshipping inanimate

objects, such as rocks, trees, or statues, rather than the true and living God.

"Unless God's love penetrates into the hearts and lives of these people, they will go on living in fear," she says. "They believe that they either must be good enough to earn their way to heaven (Islam) or sacrifice to unknown gods (animism)."

Animists exist in the some 130 unreached people groups that the McGuires live among in West Africa. These people have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel in their own



SURVIVOR — West Africans who live in fear of evil spirits often accuse others of witchcraft when bad things happen. This woman survived a witchcraft trial by drinking a poison potion. Southern Baptist workers in West Africa pray that God will send more Christians to help them spread the good news of spiritual freedom in Christ Jesus. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

language and do not have the Bible nor the "Jesus" film in their native tongue.

For example, says Leah, the Bozo are a group of nomadic fishermen numbering more than 180,000 and living along the Niger River in Mali. Only 23 known Christians live among this group. In Mankono, a small village in the northern Ivory Coast, there are 45 mosques and no churches.

The McGuires travel throughout this area, researching these people groups, so outreach strategies can be devel-

oped and needed materials can be provided. As Ivory Coast mission administrator, Tom supports and encourages the area missionaries, who have left their "city" homes in Africa to move closer to the people and demonstrate God's love to them on a daily basis.

The McGuires see West Africans responding most readily to oral presentation of the gospel, known as "storying." In one village, where missionaries shared the Bible story by story in a way that the people understand, 10 of the 13 village chiefs accepted Jesus as Savior, Leah says.

The missionaries' goal is to train Africans to story as well. "Africans are very intelligent people," Leah says. "They speak fluently many languages and memorize easily. If they can tell the Bible stories in their own language to their families and friends, imagine how the gospel can spread."

In another instance where a high total of decisions for Christ made simultaneously brought security in numbers, more than 100 U.S. volunteers witnessed one-on-one to the people

in Abidjan. As they went out together and shared their testimonies, more than 10,000 people accepted Jesus — another group response that hopefully will eliminate some of the persecution, Leah says. Follow-up becomes the responsibility of the local churches.

The McGuires regularly sacrifice permanency and creature comforts in an effort to get close to the animist people.

Although they live in Abidjan in a concrete-block, three-bedroom home that has running water and electricity (not always common among

West Africans), the McGuires choose to travel throughout the region, staying in West African homes, among missionaries, or in other temporary housing to perform their tasks.

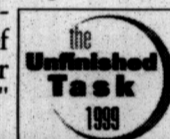
Their greatest physical need at this point is more missionaries to work among these 130-plus unreached people groups. A high priority is for medical helpers in hope that the people's average life span will increase.

To meet physical needs in other ways, wells are being dug, films are being shown, cassettes are being made in local languages, and radio programs are being developed, Leah says.

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All these projects cost money — and represent highly tangible needs as U.S. churches give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Despite the lostness in this sun-scorched land, the McGuires long to see the day that each animist, through Christ, will have "no worries in a year of drought and never fail to bear fruit" (Jer. 17:8).



PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 25, 1999

VOL. 123

No. 41



Looking back

10 years ago

Mississippi ACTS affiliates receive five first-place awards during the fourth annual ACTS awards presentation at the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth. Four different Mississippi ACTS affiliates took home the first-place honors.

20 years ago

Though organized in 1876, from 1950-75 Ebenezer Church in Desoto County had only four members and met only one Sunday a month. In 1976 the church reorganized, built a new building, and now has 112 members with an average Sunday School attendance of 80.

50 years ago

L. Gordon Sansing assumes his duties as pastor of Davis Memorial Church, Jackson, preaching his first sermon on Nov. 20. Sansing was pastor of First Church, Booneville, for four years prior to accepting the call to Davis Memorial Church.

SPIRIT TREE — Animists in West Africa often offer sacrifices to spirits that inhabit rocks or trees, in the hope those spirits will help them, or at least not hurt them. Goats — and sometimes children — are sacrificed at spirit trees like this one in Liberia. Millions of lost people in West Africa live in fear of spirits, not knowing about a loving God who is more powerful and his Son, who has already made the ultimate sacrifice. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

Prayer campaign announced

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP) — Plague, war, famine, and drought threaten the future — perhaps even the very existence — of Africa's 771 million people, so Southern Baptist missionaries are launching an ambitious campaign to bathe the entire continent in prayer. A special day of prayer for the entire continent, called 2001-PRAY (Pray 'Round Africa-Yes), is planned for Aug. 3, 2001.

Great Commission Christians throughout the world are being encouraged to spend some time praying for the spread of gospel across Africa. Volunteers are being recruited to prayer walk in different African countries.

Prayer coordinator Anita Hunt said 2001 - PRAY is a unique project because it covers an entire continent. "This prayer emphasis is also unique in that it is not just for Southern Baptists or Americans," Hunt said. "We invite all Great Commission Christians around the world to join us. Prayer will make a difference for Africa."

The goal is to have thousands of believers praying. An Internet site — www.2001pray.org — has been established to let prayer warriors know concerns and specific ways they can help. The site not only lists prayer concerns but also gives information and stories on the different countries and people living in Africa. The prayer list will be updated bi-weekly with new concerns.

Gulfport church gets creative for offering

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

First Church, Gulfport, had never given more than \$38,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (LMCO), so in July of this year, pastor Chuck Register challenged the congregation to give \$50,000 to LMCO in 1999.

"I did a sermon on the parable of the talents. During the invitation I gave each

family who would participate \$10, which they were to invest and then bring the \$10, plus the earnings, back to the church on Dec. 19 for our March to the Manger emphasis," Register said.

That Sunday, 193 families accepted the challenge. Since then, the number has risen to 215-225 families.

The campaign started all sorts of creative efforts to raise money. Karen Simmons, a secretary at the church, said people used the \$10 to buy raw goods for baking, and then held a bake sale.

"I had three loaves of homemade bread that went for \$105," she said. "Of course, they knew the money was going for Lottie Moon."

Simmons said there have been spaghetti lunches, craft sales, and lots of other efforts to take the \$10 seed money and turn it into a mighty harvest for missions.

However, no one anticipated what Laura Holleman and Alva Peden would do for the offering.

"My friend and I came up with the idea at lunch," Holleman said. "We were talking about the pink flamingos that some have used as a fund raiser — it's put in your yard and you have to pay so much to have it removed. So we got this commode, spray painted it gold, and put polka dots all over it and flowers in it, and called it 'Johnny Moon,'" she said.

"Johnny Moon" then ended up on someone's front lawn with a note that said the home owners would have to put \$25 in a provided zip-lock bag and call a pick-up number to get rid of it.

For \$10 extra, the victim could have "Johnny Moon" forwarded to a special

friend's yard. For \$25, Holleman sells an insurance policy guaranteeing the potty will not show up in the purchaser's yard.

Holleman said the project reached across denominational lines, drawing support for the LMCO. "Johnny Moon" was eventually joined by a companion, "Lottie Potty."

When a local newspaper came to do a story on the project, Holleman was able to share with the photographer about the work of the church and missions.

"Three weeks ago, he joined the church," she said.

"The 'Lottie Potty' is certainly one of the most creative, ingenious ideas to come out of this," Register said. "To date, it has raised almost \$5,000 for LMCO."

Simmons says this year's effort has energized the whole church. "I have never heard this much excitement about Lottie Moon," she said.

Register agreed, noting, "One of the side benefits of this has been how it has brought the entire congregation together working for the Kingdom."

On Dec. 19, the church will have its March to the Manger emphasis. Three missionary families with ties to the congregation will have representatives present.

At the front of the church will be two mangers. One manger is for people to place their gift to the LMCO. The other manger is for people to return the \$10, plus however much they were able to earn with it.

Register fully anticipates that on Dec. 19, the congregation will exceed the \$50,000 challenge.



FRONT YARD SURPRISE — Gulfport neighbors (from left) Dean Holleman, Allie Peden, Hollis Holleman, Bill Peden, and Sarah Gant Holleman inspect the objects of their mothers' unorthodox fund-raising campaign for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. The Holleman and Peden families are members of First Church, Gulfport. (Photo courtesy of The Sun-Herald/James Edward Bates)

Missionary working to lift darkness of Brazilians

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil (BP) — It was all in a day's work for missionary Wade Akins. During one noontime, he showed up in downtown Belo Horizonte, his hometown in Brazil, and preached on the streets for an hour and a half while hundreds of people milled about in the plaza. Eighty people trusted Christ as Lord and Savior.

By missionary standards, this impassioned evangelist's effort that day — and on other days like it — was successful. It's courageous forays like these

that contribute to Brazil's ranking as the No. 1 harvest field among Baptists worldwide.

During his 17 years of work in Brazil, countless thousands have responded to Akins' version of "pioneer evangelism," a program involving lay people in evangelism, discipleship, and church starting.

As Akins praises God for these results, he looks past them into an irrepressible darkness that pervades every corner of Brazil, the largest country in South America.

He looks into the eyes of pagan religion, which he says deceives people into believing they are part of the Christian faith. Large numbers of his audience are unbelieving Roman Catholics — or "cultural Catholics," as they could be termed. Roman Catholics make up as much as 85% of Brazil's population.

"What makes our target group not Christian is that the Roman Catholic religion is not Christian," he says. "If one believes that worshipping

Mary, saints, idols, and images, and spiritism is a part of the Christian faith, then that person has a lack of understanding of true faith in Christ. The Roman Catholic church does not teach salvation in Christ alone. You are justified by works in their teaching."

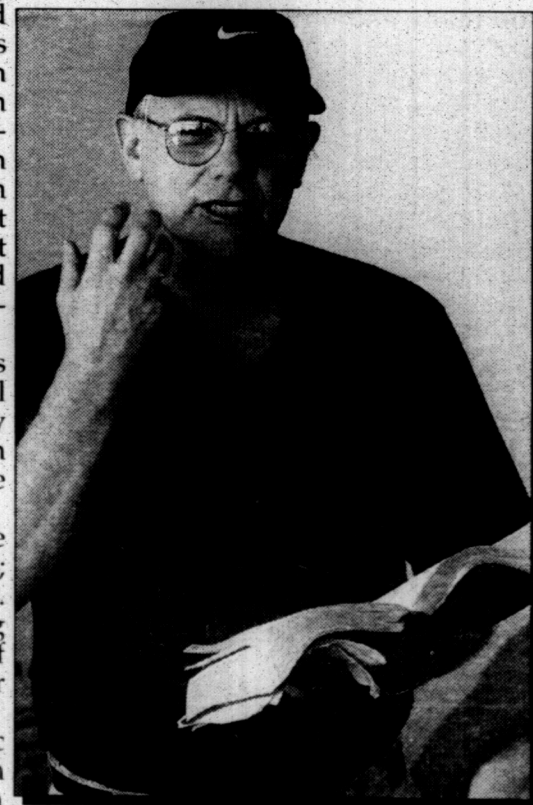
As Akins and his wife, Barbara, travel throughout Brazil, they see a huge Roman Catholic church in the heart of every city.

"Roman Catholics have a works-based salvation; they just add Jesus to it. Adding Jesus to anything is idolatrous, regardless if it is Catholicism or Hinduism."

The Roman Catholic church also promotes an immoral lifestyle in Brazil, Akins believes. "They openly sponsor gambling and beer parties in the plazas in order to raise money. They own bars that sell hard liquor," he says.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions has supplied a portion of the salary, housing, and medical care for him and his wife, Barbara, and furnishes their truck, paints, gasoline, tracts, Bible studies, and discipleship materials.

Akins carries on with a sim-



STREET PREACHER — Southern Baptist missionary Wade Akins trains others in practical evangelism techniques to take the gospel into "pioneer" areas of Brazil, places where no Baptist work is found. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

ple premise: Lostness among the Latin American population must be conquered.

He sums up what drives him by saying, "If you study the Word of God, there are two kinds of people — lost and saved. That is it."



EASY TO UNDERSTAND — Southern Baptist missionary Wade Akins uses fluorescent paints and a black light to conduct "paint talks" that illustrate the good news of salvation in terms people on the street can readily understand. Baptists set up six paint talk sites this past year during "Carnaval," a massive orgy of alcohol, drugs, and immoral sex that fills the streets of Brazilian cities annually. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

MBHC planning February 2000 workshop

CLINTON, Miss. (Special) —The Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission (MBHC) will conduct a church anniversary workshop on Feb. 19, 2000, at First Church, Clinton, to assist churches planning celebrations of significant anniversaries (100, 125, 150, 175, and 200 years) during 2000-2002.

The 1998 workshop was very popular, with attendees receiving information about the value of celebrating significant anniversaries, including the options of scheduling basic, intermediate, or comprehensive celebrations, and the methodology of planning an anniversary.

The 2000 workshop will begin with 9 a.m. registration and conclude at 3:30 p.m., and will feature a popular section entitled, "The Nuts and Bolts of Writing a Church History." Registrants will also:

- view the comprehensive resources available in the MBHC historical collection, located in the Mississippi College Library on the Baptist-affiliated school's Clinton campus.

The resources are available for research and to assist in writing church histories.

- hear representatives of First Church, Canton, a congregation which recently planned and celebrated a significant anniversary.

- talk with the anniversary committee of First Church, Collins, which is now planning for that church's centennial observance in 2000.

Although the workshop is specifically designed for churches celebrating significant anniversaries, all churches are invited.

Edward L. McMillan, MBHC executive secretary, reported a total of 33 Mississippi Baptist churches representing 4700 years of combined service have celebrated significant anniversaries in 1999, with a MBHC representative in attendance to present a letter of commendation and a certificate of recognition.

Records provided by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board indicate that 44 Mississippi Baptist churches have significant anniversaries in 2000; 36 churches in 2001; and 50 churches in 2002.

"These anniversary celebrations provide an ideal opportunity for Mississippi Baptist churches to review a rich heritage, observe unbelievable blessings, and commit anew to a promising future," McMillan said.

If any Mississippi Baptist church is celebrating a significant anniversary during one of these years and the pastor has not received information about the

February 2000 workshop by mid-January, please contact the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission.

For more information, contact the MBHC Librarian, P.O. Box 4024, Clinton, MS 39058. Telephone: (601) 924-3434. E-mail: mbhc@mc.edu.

Church anniversaries celebrated in 1999

Each church (noted by association) received a special framed anniversary certificate and a letter of congratulations to the church, presented by the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission.

100 YEARS

Big Level (Gulf Coast)
FBC, Tunica (North Delta)
Hickory Ridge (Rankin)
Olive (Pearl River)
Salem (Smith)

125 YEARS

FBC, Coldwater (Northwest)
FBC, Moss Point (Jackson)
French Camp (Choctaw)
Handsboro (Gulf Coast)
Main Street, Goodman (Holmes)
New Providence (Leake)
Piney Grove (Prentiss)
Salem (Covington-Jeff Davis)

150 YEARS

FBC, Okolona (Chickasaw)
Hebron (Yazoo)

Jerusalem (Attala)
Leaf River (Smith)
McAdams (Attala)
Oak Hill (Pontotoc)
Peach Creek (Panola)
Pleasant Hill (Leake)
Poplar Creek Nations (Montgomery)
Poplar Springs (Newton)
Red Banks (Marshall)
Siloam (Golden Triangle)

175 YEARS

Antioch (Copiah)
Byram (Hinds)
Damascus (Copiah)
FBC, Byram (Hinds)
Galilee First, Gloster (Mississippi)
Mount Zion (Simpson)
Pocahontas (Metro)
Society Hill (Covington-Jeff Davis)

PRAY FOR ELLA VATOR

Communication is a difficult process. Communicating with each other is never as easy as we think it is or as simple as we think it ought to be. "Say what you mean, and mean what you say," sounds good but often the listeners do not "hear" what is being said and "think" they are hearing something else.

Recently I was in a worship service in one of our fine churches. There was a wonderful crowd and a sweet spirit, and the beloved pastor was welcoming the guests and making some announcements. I was introduced as the guest speaker and he also welcomed a fine singing group that would be participating in the service. After the introductions, the pastor announced that we would be having a food and fellowship time immediately following the service and gave directions on how to get to the stairs that led to the fellowship hall. He welcomed everyone to come.

Some of the members of the choir, seated behind the pastor, softly reminded him of the elevator. The pastor did not understand what they were saying and turned around, at which time they said a little louder and in unison, "Elevator!" He still did not understand, so several of them called out, not quite in sync, "Elevator!" Not wanting to beleaguer the point but not sure what they were talking about, the pastor thought they were calling some lady's name. After several more tries, he got the message. He then turned to the congregation and said, "I thought they were asking for a prayer request and I was going



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

to ask us to please be praying for Mrs. Ella Vator."

The pastor did not know what Mrs. Vator's problem was, but if folks in the church thought they needed to pray for her, he wanted to share it with everyone. The entire congregation erupted with uproarious laughter as they thought about having a prayer time for Mrs. Ella Vator. I, too, sat there shaking my head laughing and enjoying the moment. I thought about what a special thing this congregation had and what significant lessons were found in such an unusual moment.

For one thing, it occurred to me that Baptist folks are thinking right. The folks in the choir were thinking about the needs of people in the congregation. The pastor, who did not understand what they were talking about, was poised to pray, even though he did not know Mrs. Vator and was not aware of all the circumstances in her life.

What a good thing it would be if all of God's people had a deep sensitivity built around "care and prayer" for others. As the congregation joined in singing the next hymn, I chuckled two or three times during the song as I thought about, "What if he had started praying?" I could just hear it: "Dear Lord, although I do not know

Mrs. Ella, I know that you know her needs and are able to take care of every burden she bears." While that did not happen, I am confident that God could have dealt with that prayer far better than he can deal with our "prayerlessness!"

How many times are there real needs, of real people, that God could really take care of, and yet we do not pray! It seems to me that it would be better for us to occasionally pray for a Mrs. Ella Vator than to miss the opportunities of prayer for the great needs we overlook.

Another precious truth that I saw in that experience was how important it is that we handle each other's deficiencies gently. I have seen times in churches when some of the saints could be critical of the pastor not understanding what was being said. I have seen folks who have taken occasion such as that to express their own critical nature—but it wasn't so at that church, with those folks, and that pastor! He, they, and I all laughed with delight when he said that he was about to have a special prayer for Mrs. Ella Vator.

Maybe it was that kind of moment, and certainly many others, that the apostle Paul was referring to in Eph. 4:32 when he said, "Be ye kind one

to another, tenderhearted..." All of us, with no exclusions, have deficiencies. We may not hear as well as others, or enunciate as well as we ought, or move as fast as the next person, or sing as pretty as someone else, but oh what a blessing it is when we have relationships and live in fellowships that can deal with those things "lightly." It not only makes life enjoyable but it demonstrates, in a living way, the grace of our wonderful, loving, and accepting Lord.

One other special truth I saw lived out in that moment was the great, reoccurring theme in the New Testament: we are to help one another. We are the body of Christ and when one member of the body needs help, the Lord has put others there to provide a lift. In Gal. 6:1, the Scripture says, "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one." It is fairly easy to analyze and evaluate such "a one." It is easy to tell why they shouldn't have stumbled, or faltered, or failed, but the Scripture instructs us to help them, and restore them, for that is the Christ-like thing to do.

In time, I am confident that no one who was in that worship service will remember the songs that were sung, the prayers that were prayed, or the sermon that I preached, but probably for years to come they will remember the prayertime we almost had for Mrs. Ella Vator. That's OK, because if they were touched as I was in that experience, then they are better people for it—closer to the Lord and more mature in their faith.

It might not hurt more of us to put on our prayer list the name of Mrs. Ella Vator!

Deadline nearing for nominations

The December 1 deadline for submitting recommendations for the position of executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) is less than a week away, and search committee chairman Bill Hardin, pastor of First Church, Picayune, reiterated that recommendations must be received by the close of business on deadline day.

The CAC is the ethics and moral values agency of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Paul G. Jones II of Clinton retired August 18 after serving as CAC executive director-treasurer for nearly 18 years.

Hardin pointed out that in order to meet the December 1 deadline, recommendations should be faxed or e-mailed to his attention. Hardin's fax number is (601) 798-5040, and his e-mail address is fbcpcipastor@datastar.net. For more information, Hardin can be contacted at (601) 798-4886.

the
**Unfinished
Task**
1999

Loving the Lost

Matthew 28:19

**Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and
International Mission Study**
November 28-December 5, 1999

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
Offering goal: \$125 million

Love of Christians drawing Han to Christ

BEIJING, China (BP) — "Yes, I will believe in Jesus, too."

Their faces are eager, their nods compliant. The message interests them; they listen respectfully. On the surface, what speaker could ask for more? The word "too," however, is the zinger that breaks Eve Hunt's heart as she emerges from conversations about Christ with the Han people of China.

Tragically, the response signifies that these with whom she lives are merely willing to add the one and only true God to their "collection of idols on their 'god shelves' in their homes," says Hunt (not her real name). Among these people, she hears "no comprehension that when Jesus enters the heart of a person, there is no need, room, or allowance for false gods."

This heartbreak has prompted Hunt to plant her life for almost two decades among the Han people, who comprise 93% of China's 1.3 billion population. She does this with the goal that many millions of them will come to know Christ as Savior. Currently less than 5% do.

Hunt grieves as she sees young professionals, families with children, and scores of others pour into Buddhist temples to burn incense to the false gods, calling it "heart-breaking beyond anything that can be expressed."

Still others of the Han tell Hunt, "We were taught to believe in nothing." She says she routinely talks to taxi drivers, children, students, and others who have never heard the name of Jesus, yet many are searching for some meaning in life. Besides atheism and Buddhism, other religions of the Han are ancestor worship, Taoism, Confucianism, and materialism.

"Christians must act now to point those who were raised in a spiritual void to relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus," she says. "Apart from Christ, there is no other hope for these beautiful people."

"Beautiful people" is a term that readily flows off Hunt's tongue and straight from her heart, as she describes her sense of enmeshment with the Chinese, who represent the world's oldest surviving culture.

Upon moving to East Asia, she spent the first several years in language study, an investment she will never regret. As she progressed from "survival conversation" to fluency, "I realized how closely my understanding of the people was wed to my ability to both speak and comprehend their mother tongue."

Now, she prefers to sing many hymns and choruses in Chinese "because they just communicate better that way."

Hunt has fit into Chinese society so thoroughly that she routinely follows such traditions as removing her shoes before entering a home, drinking soup straight from the bowl, or giving red envelopes at Chinese New Year's. Hunt says this culture "has become my own because of (Christ's) love."

Despite Hunt's love and accessibility, huge barriers prevent her adopted people from accepting the message of Christ. The largest barrier is fear, and not without cause, she says.



LOST MILLIONS — Hundreds of millions of Han Chinese are spiritually lost, and most have never heard that Jesus can deliver them from the power of sin and death. Many still would be reluctant to trust Christ because their communist government is officially atheistic and their families would reject them. Though churches in China are growing rapidly, the Han remain the largest unreached people group in the world. (IMB photo)

Because the Chinese government is atheistic, a degree of risk is involved in public spiritual activities. (The Communist Party teaches that religion is unnecessary and that the state or government is paramount.) Even those attending registered churches may be surveyed and experience complications related to their livelihood or families. Those attending unregistered churches may feel more serious forms of persecution.

For example, Hunt says one college professor's hair turned white almost overnight from trauma after her colleagues learned she was a Christian and immediately accused her of breaching school policy. Although their attacks were unsubstantiated, the woman still lost her department chairmanship.

Amazingly, bitterness never infests persecuted Christians like this woman, Hunt attests. "Months later, she reflected on how much God had taught her during the ordeal," she says.

Overcoming that fear involves "getting the Bible into the hands of a seeker or believer. The Holy Spirit, working in combination with the Word of God, will do the rest," she says.

Although Westerners serving in China must take care not to take the initiative in sharing God's truth, they may freely respond to questions posed. That makes for some "creative conversation, undergirded by prayer," that will elicit queries. Home province, family, occupation, and schooling are all good conversational starting points, Hunt says.

On a recent trip to a college campus, a woman approached Hunt and asked if she believed God exists. Sensing God's direct activity, Hunt spoke with the woman on spiritual matters for about seven minutes, sharing about God's plan of salvation and the difference Christ makes.

Although others imposed themselves into the conversation and Hunt had to drop the dialogue, she believes the woman heard the truth and responded in that brief, one-time encounter, which is typical of many she experiences.

Hunt's work with the Han involves creating opportunities for volunteers who are burdened for the needs of China. She places full-time teachers and other Christian service professionals within the country.

Some of her volunteer placements include medical, music, sports, cultural exchange and prayerwalk teams, agricultural advisors, health educators, and English teachers. These serve alongside Christian teachers, businessmen and other professionals who live and work in China on a more permanent basis and alongside Chinese Christians and churches as much as possible.

Hunt says she daily sees byproducts of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions, named for Lottie Moon, Hunt's famous predecessor among the Han, who served 100 years ago in Shantung province.

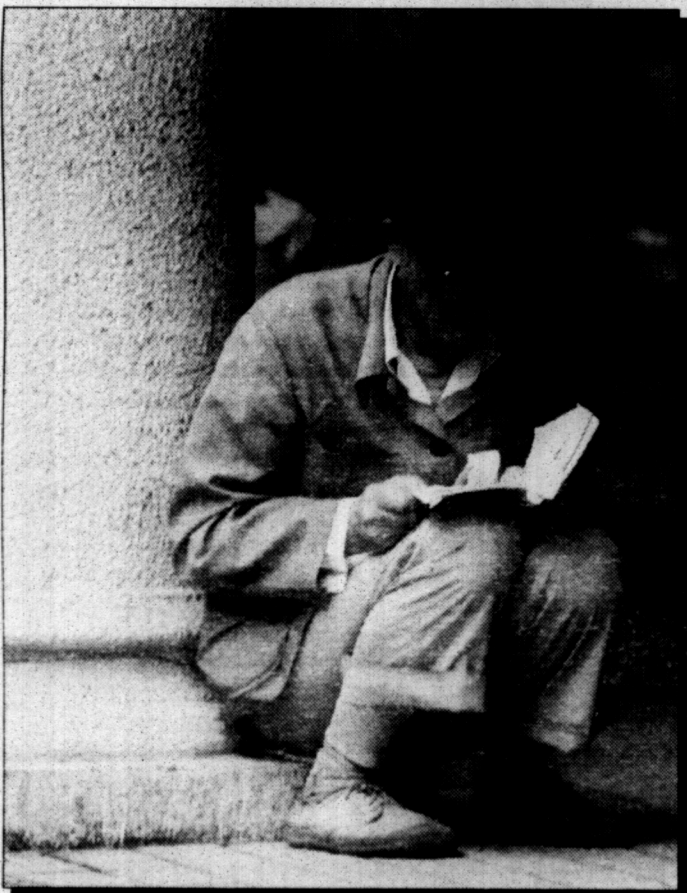
Beyond routine financial support that allows her to give herself fully to ministry, Hunt says LMCO funds purchase evangelistic materials, build structures used for decades of ministry, and fund programs that train young Chinese leaders. Recently, Hunt hand-carried relief funds into a major central China city.

"I always feel so grateful to Southern Baptists, so desirous to represent them well and so totally accountable to the Father," she says.

The Christian church in China has experienced tremendous growth, with house churches multiplying and registering daily, yet the Han remain the largest unreached people group in the world.

Reaching this vast lostness is clearly not a job for one determined, Spirit-filled woman alone.

She prays that scores of U.S. churches and groups will be led to adopt her "beautiful people" of East Asia to the end that the Han will experience adoption as the children of God.



What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

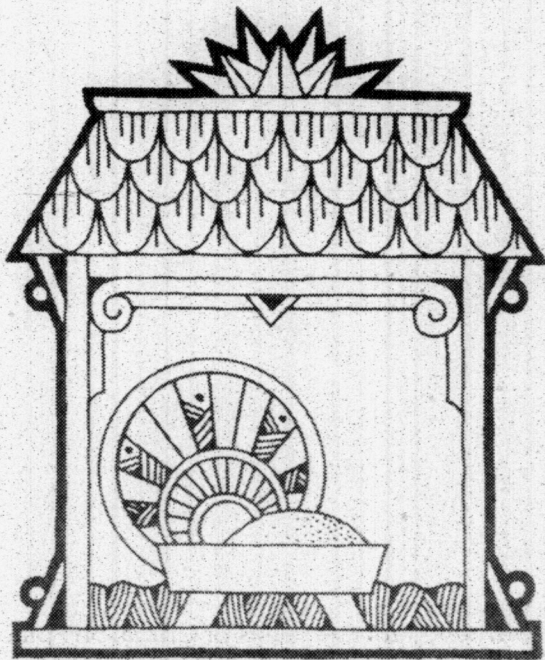
HOUSE TOPS

Matthew 10:27 NAS

November 25, 1999

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Office of Communication.

1999 Family Celebration of Christmas



Guidelines for Use

The Christmas season is such an important time in the life of the church and the individual Christian. Yet, it seems to be increasingly more difficult for families to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

In an effort to assist families and churches as they try to keep Christ in Christmas, the Family Celebration of Christmas plan has been developed.

Below are the first two in a series of devotionals for the Family Celebration of Christmas. The others will follow in the next issue of **Housetops**.

Your church has already received in its October Light Packet a set of the devotionals ready for photo copying.

For your own complete set of these devotionals, you may phone Peggy Powell at 601-292-3299, or 1-800-748-1651.

We hope these will enrich families as they seek to keep Christ at the center of the Christmas season.



PREPARATION

Fourth Sunday Before Christmas - November 28

Wreath. If using a wreath, light one of the purple candles.

Read. Have a family member read Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1.

Isaiah, writing 700 years before John's birth, and Malachi, writing 500 years before his birth, both described his ministry. It was he

who would call people to repentance, and who would help them realize that they needed to prepare their hearts to receive Jesus.

John's was not an easy task. We humans do not like being told that we have sinned and are in need of repentance. John suffered and eventually gave his life rather than deny the truth.

Read. Have a family member read Matthew 3:1-3 and 11:7-11.

When we think of preparing for Christmas, we think of getting a Christmas tree, decorating our homes and yards, buying or making gifts, having parties, and making Christmas goodies. But the Advent season really begins with the call of John the Baptist, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* If we sometimes feel a little letdown after Christmas, it could be that we have never prepared our hearts for His coming in the first place.

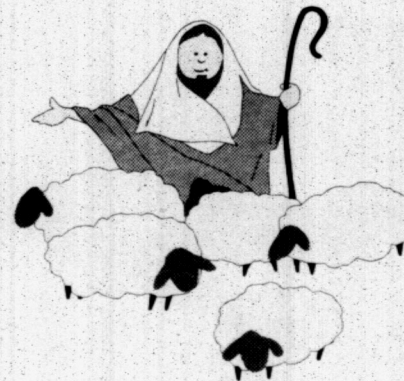
The Advent season is a time of introspection, in which we search our hearts and begin to prepare a way for the Lord. Its traditional color is purple, which symbolizes kingship, and also penitence.

In our joy at the coming of the Christ Child, let us not forget what He did not forget: that His coming was not only to be with us here on earth, but also to bring about our reconciliation with God. Thanks be to God!

Make. Work with your children to create a figure of John the Baptist out of Play-Doh or clay. Place the figure near your nativity set to remind you and your family of John's Message.

Sing O Come All Ye Faithful #89 (Baptist Hymnal). Sing as many hymns as you like!

Pray, thanking God for His gift of allowing us to make our hearts ready for Him.



HOPE

**Third Sunday Before Christmas
December 5**

Wreath. If using a wreath, light the purple candle that you lit last week and also a second purple one.

Read. Have a family member read Psalm 23.

Although we are very familiar with this beautiful psalm, we do not think of it as being particularly relevant to the coming of The Lord's Anointed One. Devout Jews, however, knew that it spoke of the Shepherd in Isaiah 40:11, and were used to thinking of a shepherd as a picture of God and His Salvation.

Read. Have a family member read John 10:1-18, 27-29.

In this beautiful passage, Jesus is saying several things to us. First, He loves us. He takes care of us, even to the point of being ready to die for us. Second, if we are His sheep, we will follow and obey Him. If we belong to Him, we will never die, and nothing will ever separate us from Him. Third, He is the Shepherd who was spoken of in Old Testament scripture. This point is subtle and not very obvious to us, but the Jews understood it well enough. In verses 19-21 of this chapter, we see that some of the Jewish leaders were angry that Jesus would dare to say such things. He had the right to say them because He was who he said He was.

Make. Work with your children to create a picture of a shepherd with his sheep. Use torn scraps of construction paper or cotton balls to give the sheep texture. Display the picture where you will see it to remind you of Jesus' role as our Shepherd.

Sing Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us #61 (Baptist Hymnal). Also, sing some Christmas carols together.

Pray, thanking God for sending His Shepherd to save us from our sins, and for loving and watching over us every day.

CHRISTIAN ANSWERS for the "NEW AGE"

PROGRAM PERSONALITIES



R. Phillip Roberts

V.P., Strategic Cities Strategy Group
N.A.M.B., Alpharetta, Ga.
Former director of Interfaith Evangelism Division,
N.A.M.B.

Jimmy Furr

Regional Director
Interfaith Evangelism, N.A.M.B.
Mt. Juliet, Tenn.

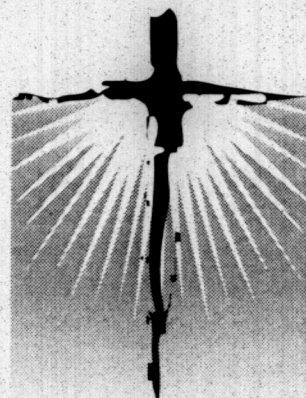


David Grumbach

Pastor
Petal-Harvey Baptist Church
Petal, Miss.

Greg O'Neal

Minister of Music
Ridgecrest Baptist Church
Madison, Miss.



2000 INTERFAITH EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

January 21, 2000
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.

Ridgecrest BC
Madison

SCHEDULE

8:45 a.m.	Ed Deuschle
	Program Interpretation
8:50	Greg O'Neal
	Praise
9:00	Phil Roberts
	"Doing Evangelism Outside the Choir"
	The challenge of religious pluralism in America
9:30	Greg O'Neal
	Praise
9:35	David Grumbach
	"The Power of the Gospel"
10:05	Greg O'Neal
	Praise
10:15	Jimmy Furr
	"New Age and Your Community"
	(a study of the New Age Movement)
11:00	Greg O'Neal
	Praise
11:10	Phil Roberts
	"Discerning the Spirit"
	(Practicing Biblical Perception in the 21st Century)
11:40	Ed Deuschle
	Conclusion

For more information, please contact the Evangelism Department, MBCB, 968-3800 or 1-800-748-1651

Keyboard Workshop 2000

for Church Organists and Pianists

March 10-11, 2000, FBC, Clinton, from 1 p.m. on the 10th until 1 p.m. on the 11th

Purpose: to provide skill development in service playing and accompanying for church organists and pianists who serve as worship leaders.



Organ

Ron Boud

Professor of Music and Organist
Union University, Jackson, Tenn.

Special Guests

Our special guests are composers and arrangers of church music for organists and pianists. Their music will be available for purchase.



Piano

Don Phillips

Minister of Music
FBC, Franklin, Ky.

A registration form with more information will be mailed in January.
The non-refundable registration fee is \$20 for each participant.

Put this workshop on your "to do" list for 2000. If you have questions, please call the Church Music Department, MBCB. Phone: 1-800-748-1651 or 601-292-3272/Fax: 601-968-3928

State Singles Retreat

Gulfshore Baptist Assembly

May 27-29

(A-Unit \$92.80; C-Unit \$85.50)

- Mission trips to New Orleans and foreign ships
- Conferences
- Jamboree
- Worship
- Fun trips
- Seafood banquet
- Night swimming
- T-shirt (reservation by May 1)



Cindy Still
*Missouri Singles
Consultant*

"T.K. & Co."
Brentwood, Tenn.



"Finding Us Faithful As Seniors"

Senior Adult Retreats, Gulfshore Baptist Assembly

Senior Adult I Retreat

May 15-17 (\$86.50)

Choir: FBC, Brandon

Woman's Conference:

Rhonda Kelly, New Orleans

Chuck Kelley

*President
New Orleans Baptist
Seminary*



Senior Adult II Retreat

May 18-20 (\$86.50)

Choir: Clarksdale BC, Clarksdale

Woman's Conference

Eugene Dobbs

*Retired
Executive Assistant
MBCB*



Senior Adult III Retreat

May 22-26 (\$155.50)

Choir: Emmanuel BC, Grenada

Woman's Conference:

Jo Ann Leavell, Wichita Falls, Tex.

Landrum P. Leavell III

*Retired President
New Orleans
Baptist Seminary*



Conferences on depression, humor, "Share Jesus Without Fear," health, "Journey of Faith"
Join us for the seafood banquet; ice cream fellowships, and much more.

Register after March 1. Call Gulfshore Baptist Assembly, Pass Christian, Miss., 1-228-452-7261



Famous Suits
Through the
A G E S



What is it?

For over 35 years Baptists in Mississippi have enjoyed sending new suits to the pastors in new work areas. This is our way of letting the Southern Baptist pastors in these areas of Southern Baptist life know that we care about and support them in their work. This year we are assisting pastors in the Nevada and New England Conventions.

What can you do?

Men's Ministries groups, individuals, churches, etc., can send their gifts payable to:
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board
Attention: Men's Ministry Department
P.O. Box 530
Jackson, MS 39205-0530

Cost: \$130 per suit

Designate your check: "Suit Project"

The
Suit
Project



*Mississippi Baptists say "Merry Christmas"
to pastors in the Nevada and
New England Conventions.*

Pray this day for...

November 26 - December 9, 1999

Prayer Ministry Office • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205-0530 • Phone 968-3800, Ext. 3904 • Mississippi PrayerLine 1-800-787-PRAY

"Wake Up Thought: 'morning by morning. O Lord, you hear my voice: morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.'"

Psalm 5:3

The Week of Prayer for International Missions, Nov. 28-Dec. 5. (WMU) Pray that much emphasis will be given to prayer for missions, missionaries, and International Mission Board who sponsors this week.

Several teams of college students will be visiting university campuses in China this Christmas season for the purpose of cultural exchange. pray that as the American college students share about their home culture and learn about the Chinese culture, they will have opportunities to share Christ.

Pray for Impact Northeast-January 2000-2007. This is a new pattern of regional partnership missions linking a multi-state convention strategy to impact the largest unchurched population in the U.S. Partners include AL, MD/Del., MS, NC, TN, TX, VA, and Northeast State Conventions

Foreign Missions Day in Sunday School (S.S. Emphasis). Pray for Carol Song, who was led to the Lord by BSU workers in Warrensburg, MO. She is now living in Taipei, Taiwan, where she works for World Vision. She is trying to witness to her parents who are devote Buddhists.

Pray for the Metropolitan Harvest Team in Chile. One of their goals is to involve 1,000 Chileans in praying for revival and spiritual awakening among Chilean believers.

Missionary Kris Rigs, in Niger, will attend a meeting in the U.S. in December for the purpose of linking up with churches adopting the Fulbe Gorgabe people. Commit to pray for their salvation and possibly send out volunteers. Ask God to call out specific churches to adopt the Fulbe Gorgabe people.

Pray for the members of a Baptist Church in a coastal city of Indonesia that have been forbidden to hold activities in their building which has been closed and sealed by local officials. Pray for the pastor and members to be strengthened in their faith.

Bruce Day is a church and community ministries missionary serving as director of a Baptist center in Rome, Ga. Pray for the newest ministries, which are the Respite Care teams, and the Literacy Missions Ministries. Pray for his mother who lives with them and has Alzheimer's.

Pray for a single woman and a family from the United States who will be going to Mongolia in the spring of 2000. Ask God to prepare them for the spiritual battle they will face as they go to Mongolia.

For several years, the Nigerian Baptist Convention has been involved in "Operation Reach All," with a goal of spreading the gospel to every people group in the country. Pray that the Lord will lead them to meet the spiritual needs of the Manga and Ngara peoples in Yobe state.

The Barabaig of Tanzania are herdsmen. When a child is born the family starts to prepare a herd of cattle to support him or her. If a young man wants to marry, he must have cattle to support his family, and to pay the bride price for his bride. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead them to the Good Shepherd who cares for them.

Pray for the French Baptists as they give themselves in fasting and prayer for the salvation of their countrymen. Ask the Holy Spirit to work among them as believers live out the gospel all across France.

Pray for the "Meeting Man to Man" rally, a national men's outreach, Dec. 3-4 in Suriname. The management of the sports hall where 2,000 men will meet has decided to reduce the rental price by 50%. Also a Christian businessman has offered to cover the cost of the rental.

Take a moment to send a card to encourage the children of our missionaries!

4-78

MR. JOSHUA METTS

Oklahoma Baptist University
Box 61174, 500 W. University
Shawnee, OK 74801-2590

Parents: Joe, Jr. & Angela, General Evangelism
SERVE IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

5-93

MISS MELEAH PEACOCK

6 Glenhill Crescent, Cochrane, Alberta
TUL 0W3 CANADA

Parents: Kevin & Brenda, Theological Education

8-84

MISS EMILY SMITH

Apartado 207, Huaraz, PERU

Parents: Steve & Vidonia Smith
Evangelism & Church Planting

13-82

MR. SCOTT COREY

7336 Anela Place, Diamondhead, MS 39520

Parents: Charles & Patricia, Field Personnel Assistance

15-92

MISS MOLLY CROCKER

500 Forest Avenue North, Fort Payne, AL 35967

Parents: George & Ginger, Sports Evangelism
SERVE IN WESTERN SOUTH AMERICA

21-97

MR. CALEB HOLYFIELD

Missionary Learning Center, 16492 MLC Lane
Rockville, VA 23146

Parents: Michael & Patricia, Church Planting
SERVE IN CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

22-86

MR. BENJAMIN BAILEY

Box GUA 746, 8424 NW 56th St., Miami, FL 33166

Parents: Alvin & Elizabeth, Music Ministry
SERVE IN MIDDLE AMERICA

26-89

MISS HANNAH RAY

Box 3369, 320005 Dnipropetrovsk-5, UKRAINE

Parents: Michael & Linda, Religious Education

29-84

MR. NEIL GREEN

119 Autumn Trail, Columbus, OH 39701

Parents: Algie & Emily, General Evangelism
SERVE IN WESTERN SOUTH AMERICA

31-80

MR. JOSHUA RACEY

Gulf Coast Jr. College, Gulfport, MS 39501

Parents: Michael & Annette
SERVE IN WESTERN SOUTH AMERICA



HOUSE TOPS

'Lost generation' in Russia difficult to reach

KHABAROVSK, Russia (BP) — The orchestra members are highly skilled in musical knowledge — trained to use their instruments to stir their Russian listeners, but for at least one of them, the most crucial knowledge in all the world — the awareness of Jesus as Savior — eludes her.

"I have to believe in myself, because there is no one else to believe in," the woman tells Connie Robbins, who plays flute in the Russian folk orchestra.

The woman's statement rips at Robbins's heart, since Robbins is not only an orchestra member but also a Southern Baptist missionary in Khabarovsk, in the far eastern reaches of Russia.

Daily, Robbins hears statements like this repeated in the world of secular atheism in which she has planted her life for the past six years. Many of her neighbors in Khabarovsk are involved in the

ritualism of the Russian Orthodox church — which to them is synonymous with being Russian. Some even think of themselves as Christian, since they were baptized Russian Orthodox as infants.

If Robbins mentions the need for a personal relationship with Christ, they dismiss it. "They see no need for Christ and think Christianity is for the weak. When they face a big problem or need help, they may go to the Orthodox church and light a candle," Robbins says.

A rigorous lifestyle with time constraints at every turn is also a major barrier to Russians' receiving the gospel, she says.

"Many don't have time (for a relationship with Christ), or don't want to take time. It is not important to them. People will say that they work all day and get home at 7 p.m. or so and are tired. On Saturday and Sunday, they need to do work around the house, or in summer they plant and harvest their gardens."

When these secular Russians do recognize a need for a personal belief system, it is sometimes filled by teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, which are growing rapidly in the region surrounding Khabarovsk.

"They have filled a lot of the void with more lies," Robbins says. Her greatest concern is for the "lost generation" — the 40- and 50-year-old Russians who were reared without Christ before communism fell in the former Soviet Union.

Robbins says these are the most heavily indoctrinated and represent the age gap

that is missing in Russian Baptist churches. These individuals often remember their parents being Orthodox Christians and

remember their having Bibles and going to church, before political oppression forced them to renounce their religion, but usually do not own Bibles themselves now.

The children of this 40- and 50-year-old category represent the group with whom Robbins works most frequently in her women's ministry in churches throughout the Far East.

She ministers to young women who have nonbelieving husbands or nonbelieving parents, a concern that "weighs most heavily on their hearts," she says. The women in churches began a program they call "women of prayer," where they meet regularly to pray for their children and for the schools they attend — especially about the influence of drugs and

alcohol from their peers.

In one instance, a set of parents in the "lost-generation" age group made life difficult for their daughter after she trusted Christ and was baptized, Robbins says.

"Baptism is a big step here and is the point where families turn their backs on those being baptized — locking the newly baptized believer in the house and taking away Bibles. It is seen as turning their back on the Orthodox church and sometimes their country," she says.

Robbins' Russian teacher — a woman in her 40s — was baptized Orthodox but has attended her church infrequently, only for her own baptism and for family funerals. She has studied the Bible as an astute student of the Russian language but sees it only as rich literature, Robbins says.

Playing her flute with the folk orchestra in Khabarovsk is one way Robbins strives to build relationships with hopes of gaining a witness.

"Russians are very emotional people, when you get through the hard exterior. A lot of this is expressed through their music and arts," she says.

Fellow orchestra members first knew that Robbins was American, then Christian, then Baptist. "I'm not sure which word scared them

the most. After six months of trying to build relationships, one young lady told me that everyone was scared of me."

"I am a small person (5-foot-3-inches tall), so it can't be my size," she laughs. "With those that I meet through other friends, the trust comes more automatically. If their friends trust you, you must be trustworthy. However, in starting from scratch, it takes time."

The distrust that runs rampant in this former communist stronghold is exemplified by the high security in her 14-story apartment building. Her floor is separated from the stairway by a metal gate, with seven apartments inside. Beyond that, her apartment has a thick metal door, even though she knows her neighbors, many of whom are grandmothers.

She looks for situations, even awkward ones, that provide brief chances for witnessing. Being stopped by traffic police can prompt their question to her of "Why are you living in Russia?" and thus her explanation. A disabled car allows Robbins to open a conversation with the repair-shop owner about her work as a missionary. Jehovah's Witnesses who run the lot where she parks her car try to engage her in debate about their beliefs. "Instead of debating, I try to focus on what Jesus did and His Godness," Robbins says. (Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that Jesus is God.)

A car for her ministry and copies of Bible studies for use with women — as well as the salary that lets her give her full attention to witness and ministry — are some tangible benefits Robbins experiences from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. A continuing need is a Russian-language publishing house in the Far East, since pastors and churches are "begging for materials" often available in the Western part of Russia but not where she ministers, she says.

Her main challenges in working with women include maintaining the high degree of interest about Christianity that swept Russia initially after communism fell. In those first few years, Russians told Robbins, "I've heard about the Bible, but we want to know more about it." They were really, really excited. It was a big mystery book to them."

She prays she'll inspire the Russian women toward vitality in worship, so worship does not succumb to habit, and can see believers truly exhibit the joy of their salvation.



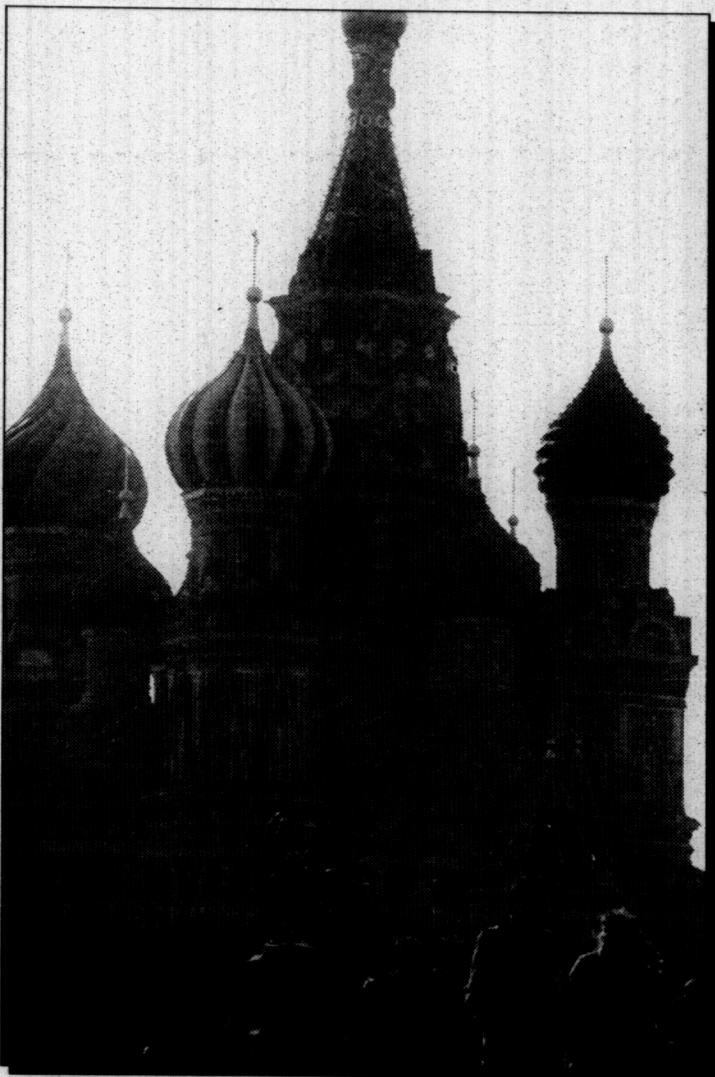
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2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



RUSSIAN SYMBOL — St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square symbolizes both Russia's historic Christian tradition and a powerful religious bureaucracy working to exert control in post-communist Russia. Seventy years of communism created a "lost generation" of Christians in Russian Baptist churches. Southern Baptist missionaries and their Russian Baptist partners are working to bring revival to Russia while they still have the freedom to witness and minister. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)



BUSY PEOPLE — Rigorous schedules, with time constraints at every turn, pose a major barrier to Russians' receiving the gospel, says Southern Baptist missionary Connie Robbins. The distrust that runs rampant in the former communist stronghold makes it difficult to develop relationships and build trust with unbelieving Russians. (BP photo by Don Rutledge)

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Mt. Vernon Church, Newton, ordained David Boulton as new deacon and voted in new member, Ricky Rainer, as a deacon. Pictured (from left) are Ricky and Annis Rainer, Karen and David Boulton, and Steve Pouncey, pastor.

Jamie Anderson was ordained as deacon at Friendship East Church, Charleston, on Sept. 24. Pictured (from left) are J. G. Thomas, pastor; and Jamie and Lisa Anderson.



Sellers and Stafford

Doris Stafford was honored for 31 years of service as church treasurer of Carson Church, Carson, on Oct. 31. She received a plaque in the morning worship service and a fellowship and special gift following the evening service. Pictured (from left) are Jimmy Sellers, pastor, and Stafford.

Newhebron Church, recently held deacon ordination for Pat Sutton. Pictured (from left) are Micky

Little, deacon chairman; Charles Davis, former pastor; Kathy Sutton; Sutton; and David Wilkinson, pastor.



Deacon ordination, Newhebron Church, Newhebron

Gambling exerting 'powerful influence'

By Beth Holmes
CAC office manager

As gambling's powerful influence on Mississippi's economic and political systems increases, so does the impact of gambling on the lives of individual citizens. Participation in gambling and the problem of addictive gambling are issues which confront church staff members and congregants all too frequently.

The prevalence of gambling as seemingly harmless entertainment for some and as a means of supporting one's family for others raises many questions among believers about the morality of gambling. Almost daily the Christian Action Commission finds itself responding to the question, "Does the Bible really have anything to say about gambling?" This question is being raised among groups of believers in family settings, in Sunday School classes, in various church meetings — anywhere that Christians gather — and seems to cause a great deal of controversy and leaves some people feeling genuinely confused.

Beginning in this issue, the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) is providing in four parts a Bible study excerpted from a pamphlet produced by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The pamphlet, entitled *Biblical Insights on Gambling*, discusses seven biblical principles that build a sound argument against gambling and that should clarify the moral aspect of gambling for believers.

The following material

includes the introduction and the first principle.

The Bible upholds changeless moral values. It proclaims everlasting principles. It outlines the importance of loving God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. And it gives practical help in enabling us to reject wrong and choose right. The moral ideals of the Bible and the Bible's insistence on obedience to the will of God are crucial for our examination and assessment of any issue involving human behavior, including the issue of gambling. Although the Bible does not have a direct commandment which explicitly prohibits gambling, it does contain some very relevant teachings which inform the Christian who seeks moral guidance on the matter. These teachings when looked at collectively, make a powerful case against gambling and against any view which regards gambling as a trivial matter. Following is one of the ways in which gambling violates a biblical principle that God has provided to guide in our relationship with him and with each other.

Gambling violates the principle of Lordship

Obedience to the will of God who is our sovereign authority

allows no room for subservience to false gods such as chance, fate, or "Lady Luck." Life's issues for Christians are settled by reference to the God who rules over all persons, all time, and all events. The great issues of life cannot be appropriately settled by the roll of the dice or the turn of a card.

God spoke against dependence on luck or chance more than 2,500 years ago. Through the prophet Isaiah he spoke against those "who forsake the Lord and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny" (Isaiah 65:11, NIV).

The deities mentioned here, Fortune and Destiny, were the pagan gods of fate who served as symbols of good luck and bad luck. The prophet's protest was against those Israelites who trusted in the false gods of chance rather than in God. God makes it clear that his people are to "have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

The pamphlet, *Biblical Insights on Gambling*, may be purchased from The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, of the Southern Baptist Convention, at a cost of .22 cents each. Call (615) 244-2495 to order.



Thomas and The Andersons



Keith McGee recently surrendered to the ministry and was licensed on Nov. 7 at Oakdale Church, Brandon. For three generations now, the McGee family has been actively engaged in the ministry. His grandfather, Curtis McGee, surrendered to preach in April, 1943, preaching and pastoring for the next 47 years. His father, Wayne McGee, is pastor of Good Hope Church, Leake County. Pictured (from left) are Wayne McGee, Curtis McGee, Keith McGee, and Gene Neal, pastor of Oakdale Church.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



West Ripley Church, Ripley

West Ripley Church, Ripley, honored Bill Baker for 20 years of service. Benny Goolsby (left) presented Baker and his wife Becky (center) with a plaque of appreciation.

A **Bible Conference** will be held at New Zion Church, Dec. 3 and 4, starting at 6:30 p.m. The church is located on Old Salem Road, northeast of Walnut Grove. Greg Renfrow is pastor.

First Church, Terry, recently collected a total of \$1,777.12 for its World Hunger Offering

using "Rice Bowl" banks. John H. Pace Jr. is pastor.

The **15th annual Singing Christmas Tree** will be held at Highland Church, Meridian. The dates and times are Dec. 9, 7 p.m.; Dec. 10, 7 p.m.; Dec. 11, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Dec. 12, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. For ticket information, call the church office at (601) 482-0191.

Homecoming

Stonewall (Simpson): Dec. 5; 11 a.m.; lunch served following morning service; Bobby Jones, pastor.



BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

The annual **Bobby Halford Baseball Camp** will be held Dec. 29-31 on the Hattiesburg campus of William Carey College (WCC) from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. each day. The camp will feature John Stephenson, former WCC coach. The camp is for ages 7 to 17 and will include fundamental aspects of all phases of the game with individualized instruction. Cost of

the session is \$90 which includes instruction, noon meals, and camp T-shirt. Applications may be obtained by calling the baseball office at (601) 582-6110 or write Bobby Halford, William Carey College, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401-5499.

The **Mississippi College Department of Music** will pre-

sent its 14th annual "Festival of Light" on Dec. 3 and 4, at 7:30 p.m. each night in Provine Chapel. This year's theme is Christmas Around the World. Participants include the Mississippi College Chamber Choir, the Concert Singers, and the Concert Ringers. Conductors for the festival are Richard Joiner, James Meaders, and Carol Joy Sparkman.

STAFF CHANGES

Floyd F. Higginbotham has accepted the call of the Franklin Association to become associational director or missions. He will begin on Dec. 1 and work part-time. Higginbotham retired from the active pastorate on

Aug. 29, after pastoring several churches in the state. His former pastorates include Center Ridge, Yazoo City; Riverside, Clarksdale; Branch, Morton; Banner, Calhoun County; Springdale, Kosciusko; Calvary, Batesville; and Pleasant Hill, Lincoln County.



Higginbotham

Magee's Creek Church, Jayess, has called **Jimmy T. Smith Jr.** as pastor effective

Nov. 10. A native of Lanett, Ala., Smith received his education at William Carey College and New Orleans Seminary.

David J. Smith, who served as pastor for eight years at Shiloh Church, Mantachie, retired on Aug. 22. He served churches in Tennessee,



Smith

Michigan, and the past 25 years in Mississippi. Smith and his wife Inez are now making their home in Mooreville, Lee County. He is available for supply and can be reached at (662) 680-5603.



Pate and Green

Parkway Church, Kosciusko, has called **Byron C. Green** (right) as minister of music and youth. He had previously served as interim minister of music at Calvary Church, Starkville. Pictured with Green is Joe M. Pate, pastor.

Clarke Venable Memorial Church, Decatur, has called **Stan Buckley** as pastor effective Nov. 21. Buckley is a graduate of Mississippi School of

Law at Clinton and also received a master's degree in Divinity at New Orleans Seminary. His previous place of service was Summerland Church, Taylorsville.



Buckley

RAs of First Church, Coldwater, recently went on a campout at Camp Luttrell. Patches were presented to the boys after completing their grade level requirements from the Campcraft Workbook. The RA leaders are Steve Luttrell and Joe DeLuca.



Bethesda Church, Terry, has called **Joe Wood** as minister of music and **Trent Bell** as youth minister. Pictured (from left) are Wood; Marty Wilson, pastor; and Bell.

Good News, Great Joy!
15th Annual Singing Christmas Tree
Highland Baptist Church
 3400 27th Street
 Meridian, MS 39305

Ticket Requests

There is no charge for tickets, but the youth ministry would like to make our Singing Christmas Tree a Giving Tree by requesting that ticket holders bring unwrapped toys or canned food. Toys will be given to Meridian's Christmas Clearing House and Lauderdale Baptist Association Crisis Center.

PRESCHOOLERS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO PROTECT THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS.

Concert Times

Thursday	December 9	7:00 p.m.
Friday	December 10	7:00 p.m.
Saturday	December 11	4:00 p.m.
Saturday	December 11	7:00 p.m.
Sunday	December 12	4:00 p.m.
Sunday	December 12	7:00 p.m.

Tickets are honored until 20 minutes prior to performance. For more information call 601-482-0191.



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Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

ARTICLE INCISIVE

Editor:

Thank you for the editorial by Carl White dated October 28, concerning Halloween. His writing brought a great deal of light to a bubbling issue for both parents and children. I, also remember the days of childhood and the joys of "getting candy" which was always the intention of my forays into the neighborhood. I did not need the historical background of the statement "trick or treat," since filling my treat bag with candy was the only goal. That childhood exercise soon elapsed around the age of 11 or 12. It is now a cherished memory.

The intention of parents to protect their children is a noble one, but I know of no "small fry" ghost or witch who went from "trick or treating" into occultism or the Church of Satan. In truth an alarmist attitude of individuals over this point may have the reverse effect of making Halloween even more intriguing, since it is "forbidden."

As one woman remarked, "Adults sometimes have a way of ruining childhood." Indeed! Being "more than conquerors" will help us to withstand the perceived and more importantly the real dilemmas of our living.

Thanks again for your article — incisive in both historical, personal, and spiritual dimensions.

Bryant Barnes, pastor
Calvary Church, Tupelo

AGAINST HALLOWEEN

Editor:

What a shame that a man in Carl White's position feels the need to ridicule other Christians for their personal convictions (Who's afraid of Halloween?, Oct. 28 issue). We are called to be separate from the world. I am not "afraid" as White suggests. I simply see no virtue in teaching my children that begging candy or tricking their neighbors is a way to have fun, not to mention all of the other evils that happen on that night. I see no reason as a Christian to become involved, because we are warned in 1 Thess. 5:22 to flee the very appearance of evil.

Comparing a celebration of our Lord's birth to this night is

like comparing rotten apples to oranges. We must learn to live peaceably with all men as we are called and not condemn others for their personal convictions when they are scripturally based. I have a personal conviction against Halloween and all Satan-related events. If that seems unreal to you, I am sorry.

Sharon White
Olive Branch

APPRECIATION FOR KING

Editor:

The passing of Kermit King on October 31 prompts me to write a word of appreciation for this friend of many and great contributor to the work of Southern Baptists as well as Mississippi Baptists in a past generation.

King came to Mississippi in the fifties from South Carolina. He served as director of the then Training Union Department. (The name was changed to Discipleship and Family Ministry in 1989.) He served in this position for 30 years before his retirement at the end of 1982. King was a firm believer in discipleship training, Bible Drills, and Senior Adult Ministries. Early on, he was concerned with senior adults and initiated the organization of church clubs and provided for senior adult weeks at Gulfshore.

King also saved Bible Drills in Mississippi. The Sunday School Board was about to drop tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders from Bible Drills. He maintained that they would continue to be a part of Bible Drills in Mississippi. As a result of his efforts (and continued efforts of the staff of this department and hundreds of volunteers each year), Mississippi leads the convention in Bible Drill participation year by year, and especially in the youth area.

We owe Kermit King a debt of appreciation for his tremendous contribution to the work of Mississippi Baptists and especially in his area of work.

Those who may want to make a contribution in his honor may do so by contacting the

Mississippi Baptist Children's Village where a fund has been established in his honor.

Mose D. Dangerfield
Clinton

BEST CONFERENCE

Editor:

Last month my wife Geri and I had the privilege of participating in a Global Impact Missions Conference at Crossgates Church, Brandon. As a Southern Baptist who has been a missionary with another organization (Wycliffe Bible Translators) for over 20 years, I have participated in missions conferences in many different churches all over the U.S. This is the best missions conference I have ever attended.

As a missionary, one of the most positive features was the quality and quantity of the contact we had with the church members. I encourage other churches to host a Global Impact Missions Conference.

Harry J. Harm
Philadelphia

EVERY AREA AFFECTED

Editor:

Thanks to Jim Futral for his informative article (Directions) in the November 11 issue of The Baptist Record. He addressed a result of abortion which is seldom publicized. Recent government statistics indicate that the U.S. would be at zero population growth were it not for immigration.

Every area of society is affected by our regard for human life. We must stand firm to protect the innocent and helpless, whether it be from abortion, withholding of treatment, or euthanasia.

Joann Gandy
Brandon

BROGAN: MAN OF FAITH

Editor:

For the past three years I have been travelling around Mississippi with Richard Brogan (consultant at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board) and observed him interacting with people of all races, backgrounds, and denominations. No one, in my opinion, can top Richard when it comes to the ministry of reconciliation.

When Richard asked me about helping with the Leadership Conference, I had no idea that they would be so successful. I never thought for one minute that people would drive one-way, four to five hours to attend a leadership conference, but no matter where the conferences are located the people come.

We have focused primarily on two areas: how to develop an effective ministry for the church, and how pastors and their wives may model biblical principles for marital enrichment before their congregations.

At times, the participants have so many questions they don't want to stop when the time is over. I have also heard them talk about how much they have learned, not from just my class but from the other classes as well.

What is it about this man that causes so many African-Americans to follow him?

For one thing, he is a great man of faith and acts decisively out of a great, big heart of love. I believe people follow him because he is gifted to inspire them to want to develop and because he is gentle with his influence. I believe there is no other way to respond to a man like Richard Brogan. You see, we love him!

Lloyd C. Blue, president
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FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Choosing with deliberation

Joshua 24:1-2, 14-22, 25

By Jerry L. Smith

Our world presents many choices. We choose a mate, vocation, and where we are going to live.

All of these choices are life changing, but the most life-changing decision we're called to make is whether or not we are going to follow God.

I chose to give my life to Christ twenty years ago. Though the choices I have made in the last twenty years have been important, none have been as important as my decision to accept Christ.

My decision to follow Christ affected every other decision that followed. Is your Christian commitment impacting every other decision you make? If it's not, it should be.

As you study Joshua's challenge to the nation of Israel, ask yourself, "Am I following God? Is my decision genuine?"

Necessary choice (vv. 1, 2, 14, 15). Most people bristle when told they "have to do something." General Eisenhower understood this fact about human behavior. When Ike commanded new subordinates, he taught them a truth about working with people using a simple piece of string. He'd place the string on the table in front of him and say, "Pull it and it will follow you wherever you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all."

Joshua knew that he couldn't push people into a decision. He was aware that if the decision was going to be genuine,



Smith

they would have to make it on their own.

Have you made a decision about following God? He's not going to force you to follow him.

Questionable commitment (vv. 16-20).

After Joshua received the Israelites' commitment to unwavering devotion to God, he reminded them of the consequences of failing to follow through with their decision.

Our relationship to God demands complete allegiance. God is not interested in having "lone rangers" or "super stars" on his team. He requires selfless sacrifice and undivided loyalty — like John Wooden.

Wooden coached the UCLA Bruins to more college basketball championships than any other NCAA coach in history. He insisted on a level of dedication and selflessness that is almost unheard of today. Wooden demanded uniformity — from the way socks were

worn to the ban on facial hair.

When a young recruit named Bill Walton told Wooden, "Coach, I have a beard and I am going to keep it," Wooden smiled and said, "We're going to miss you, Bill." He shaved his beard!

When we sign on with God, we commit to doing things his way. Is there something you need to "shave off" in the interest of obedience?

Genuine faith (vv. 21, 22, 25). Joshua sealed the people's commitment to God by making a covenant between them and the Lord. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. The Israelites agreed to a covenant with God out of gratitude for all he had done for them.

Missionary David Livingston attributed his success in reaching the African people to the cutting of a covenant. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to reach the Africans with the gospel, a tribesman gave him this advice, "You need to cut a covenant with the people."

Livingston asked, "What do you mean by that?" The man explained that when two parties cut a covenant (which was sealed with blood and binding until death) they immediately became involved in a cooperative relationship.

Livingston discovered that after he cut a covenant with one tribe, he also had access to other tribes. Now he was a part of a huge family of tribes linked together by covenants. Needless to say, he went on to become one of the most successful evangelists to the continent of Africa.

God has made a covenant with us through the blood of Jesus. Are you living up to your side of the covenant? God had made the ultimate sacrifice by offering up his Son. What sacrifices are you making for him?

God is challenging you with the same question Joshua put to the Israelites — whom are you going to serve? When are you going to make that decision?

Smith is pastor of First Church, Summit.

LIFE AND WORK

Playing God

Jonah 4:1-11

By Tom Atwood

What are your values? What is important to you? All of us devote our time, our talents, and our tithes to those things that we value. What kind of value should we place on our Lord's mandate to carry the gospel to the world?

Some are not involved in the world missions enterprise simply because they do not know how to be involved. Others fail in this because they are self-absorbed and have no compassion for lost people. Still others carry destructive attitudes of disdain and prejudice toward certain people of different races, ethnic origin, or culture.

In doing so, people play God.

The love of God has no cultural nor ethnic limitations. He is no respecter of persons. As Paul would say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:26).

How big is my God? (vv. 1-3). Jonah had learned some things but he needed to learn more. He learned to obey but not to love. His message was from God but his attitude was not. Jonah was angry because God had shown compassion to Nineveh. He retorted: "Isn't this what I said would happen? This is the reason I tried to run



Atwood

in the first place!"

How tragic that Jonah would rather die than see God's deliverance of the Ninevites. His thinking became so twisted that he perceived that, unlike himself, the Ninevites should not be spared. Jonah did not want to go on living in a world where God would save such undeserving people.

Christian missions, supported by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, are based on the biblical truth of man's universal need and God's unconditional love for sinners. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." (John 3:16). Is your God big enough?

What makes me happy? (vv. 4-9). Jonah chose a perch with a good view of the city. He waited to see if perhaps God would change his mind and rain destruction upon Nineveh.

God chided Jonah for his anger because he had much to learn about God's great all encompassing love.

Jonah needed to learn from God, and in God's classroom there was a vine, a worm, and a scorching east wind. These became effective communicators of divine truth. Jonah learned that no one group is ever the soul possessor of God's amazing grace.

How long since you examined your values? What do you love? Are you interested only in self or do you find joy in the salvation of lost people in your neighborhood and around the world? One sign of authentic salvation is a sincere desire to see others saved.

Do I really care? (vv. 10-11). Jonah had deep concern over a single vine that had no purpose except the pleasures its shade brought him. He cared much about himself but cared little about a whole city of people

who would be destroyed. In contrast, God had great concern for the city of people.

In your love, have you moved beyond your own self and your desires? The love of God should inspire and change so that Christ's followers would love the things that Christ loves. God's concern was for a city of spiritually blind people (v. 11) whose needs were great — far greater than a vine.

Many have caught the vision of God's love for an unbelieving and undeserving world. They have found great joy and personal fulfillment in sharing God's great grace. They have given their time, talents, and financial resources because they first gave themselves.

Won't you join God in expressing his love to a world that is as blind as ancient Nineveh?

Atwood is pastor of First Church, Oxford.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

New venture

Numbers 31:1-36:13

By Sylvia Fleming

We sometimes have difficulty understanding the behavior of the Lord. People sometimes accuse God of not being fair. However, God is not held to the laws of man. In fact, God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Is. 55:8).

We are also told, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). Consequently, God can do whatever he chooses to do.

Though it might not suit our fancy at the moment, God in his omnipotence and omniscience knows what is best and

expects obedience. Jesus himself was obedient to the Father even unto death (Philippians 2:8).

Therefore, why should we be any less obedient than the Master?

In this light we can look at God's specific instructions to the Israelites as they were preparing to enter the Land. The Israelites were to drive out the inhabitants, and destroy their images and all their high places (areas of idol worship). Then, they were to take the land and settle it, after casting lots to divide the land. Each tribe's inheritance was to be awarded according to size.



Fleming

The tribes of Reuben and Gad had been so blessed and their herds of cattle were so large that when they saw abundant pastureland on the eastside of the Jordan River, they saw no need to cross over. Even though God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, a land filled with abundant riches, they wanted the immediate gratification of staying with what they could see.

They said to Moses, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given to thy servants for a possession and bring us not over the Jordan" (32:5).

According to Scofield, these tribes exemplified people bordering on the ways of the world, depicting carnal Christians. How often do we give up promised blessings from God just to satisfy that which is immediately pleas-

ing to our eyes.

The two tribes' requests did not sit well with Moses. He resented the thought that they would stay on the east and do nothing while the remaining tribes in obedience would cross over and go to war. Such a circumstance would greatly discourage the remaining ten tribes. Moses even accused Reuben and Gad of the same sin that their forefathers had committed: discouraging the people at Kadesh after hearing the spies' reports.

Not only would their request to stay on the east discourage the remaining Israelites, but it would also disrupt their unity. Because of former mutiny, Joshua and Caleb were the only two twenty years of age and above to be allowed into the Promised Land. Moses certainly wanted no repetition of that incident which caused ungodly rebellion.

However, the people from the tribes of Reuben and Gad

came back to Moses with a counter offer, saying they would build shelters for their herds, fortify the area for their families, and then cross over the Jordan with the other Israelites.

Gad's and Reuben's tribes agreed not to leave the children of Israel until all the tribes on the western side of the Jordan had their inheritance. Moses finally acquiesced after it was understood that the eastern tribes would not return home until all the western enemies were driven out, thus, enabling God's chosen people to inhabit the land.

Oh, how like those two tribes we are — always cheating ourselves of God's very best, and we seem not to even care. Insisting upon immediate satisfaction, most of us rob ourselves of promised blessings by not waiting upon God, our Creator, Redeemer. God forgive us!

Fleming is a member of Bond Church, Neshoba Association.

the
Unfinished Task
1999
Loving the Lost
Matthew 28:19
Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and
International Mission Study
November 28-December 5, 1999
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
Offering goal: \$125 million

Missionary struggles to free Bengali people

DHAKA, Bangladesh (BP) — "God is love." It's a message Christians sing from their earliest years.

However, Asian Muslims, such as those in the people group that Jay East (not his real name) lives among, are astounded when East shares with them these concepts about God. They see God as one who is far off, vengeful, and capricious.

"To hear that he is loving, concerned and that he desires a close, personal relationship with each of us is an amazing, new concept that truly excites them," East says.

East looks in the face of lostness each day as he works among Bengali Muslims, who represent one of the largest people groups in the world and live in southern Asia. The vast majority of Bengali are found in Bangladesh and northeast India, although significant communities of Bengali exist in other parts of India as well.

Here's how East describes what he encounters:

"The Bengali Muslim believes that Jesus Christ was a great prophet, but not the Son of God," he says. These Asian Muslims "believe that Christians are evil because they worship more than one God. They do not understand the Trinity as one."

Most of the people live without hope because few are able to maintain the rituals Muslims must enact in order to be right with God, in their estimation.

Among these people without hope, East finds many admirable traits. Bengali Muslims value family togetherness and are hospitable. Even when they are needy, they will give their best to a guest. They constantly think of God. "If they tell you they will see you tomorrow, they will always say, 'If God wills,'" East says. Yet their concept of God sadly misses the mark.

To help them understand God, East tries to overcome misunderstandings Bengali Muslims have about Christianity and its beliefs. "They have been taught for so long that Christianity is bad. To start (witnessing) by saying, I want to tell you about Christ, will get an immediate rejection," he explains.



PITCHING IN — This Bengali Muslim man participated in a food for work program at Gargari Union, Bangladesh, after floods devastated the region. Southern Baptist missionaries devised the food-for-work plan as a way to relieve human suffering, help people recover from flood damage — and bear witness to God's love in Christ Jesus. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

East and his colleagues have set a goal of facilitating 100 new churches in the next two years, with the hope of sparking a church-planting movement that will replicate itself among the Bengali Muslim people.

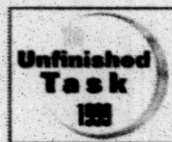
East and others like him who work among the Bengali Muslims believe prayer is the key to eliminating the bondage of darkness.

They are asking for 10,000 people around the world to commit to pray for the release of these people. They specifically seek teams who would travel to central and southern Asia to prayerwalk on-site, ideally praying over an area before a new team is sent in to focus on that district.

He takes seriously the words of Revelation 7:9: "There before me was a great multitude that no one

could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language."

Jay East is confident that many from the Bengali Muslim population will be a part of that number.



WHO WILL TELL THEM? — This school outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, teaches boys the Q'uran (Koran), the scriptures of Islam. While these boys will learn about Jesus as a prophet, they will hear nothing about how he can reconcile them to God. (BP photo by Charles Ledford)

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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SKF LGLFI NFLL RA
WDKCD EI YRA KCD
SFTRN. SKF KS NYKFDA
VLD XK DKN PQNYLF
SRPA, DKF KS Q EFQVEBL
ETAY PQNYLF NYLI
PFQMLA.

BTWL ARH: SKFNI-SKTF

Clue: N = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Matthew Twenty-Two: Thirty-Two.

Strife-torn Cambodia seen as ripe for the Gospel

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (BP) — More than two decades have passed since daily headlines detailed news of American bombings in Cambodia, but when Phil Wardell (not his real name) confronts Cambodians whose lives were forever changed by the Vietnam War, the hatred among many is raw and fresh.

Wardell, a Southern Baptist living in Southeast Asia, finds it challenging to tell Cambodians about Christ when his hearers hurl back, "Your people bombed our villages!"

For Cambodians, 94% of whom are Buddhist, "forgiving a transgressor or forgetting how they have been transgressed" is a thoroughly alien concept, explains Wardell. Fewer than 1% of the Cambodian people are Christian.

When Cambodians do confess faith in Jesus Christ, they often query Wardell and other Christians, "Why has it taken you so long to get here with the Gospel?"

A major issue: separating Buddhism from cultural identity among the Central Khmer, the people group that Wardell and his wife live among. Central Khmer make up 90% of the country's total population.

"To be Khmer is to be Buddhist," Wardell says. "It is difficult to persuade the Cambodian people that they can be Khmer and Christian at the same time." Forsaking their family's religion to embrace the Christian faith portends swift, permanent rejection by loved ones.

Once, after Wardell witnessed for two hours to a Cambodian village leader, the man said, "We will consider becoming Christian, but first we must talk with our families and the other village members." When salvation does occur, a local body of baptized believers becomes the "adoptive family" of the new Christian, since other family members often shun him.

Southern Baptist representatives who work in Cambodia alongside Wardell and his wife side-step high-profile roles and remain behind the scenes as they support, mentor, and provide role models for local believers, who have planted more than 70% of the Baptist churches in Cambodia. Local church leaders are experi-

encing explosive growth, having established 100 new churches since July 1997.

"If Christianity does not

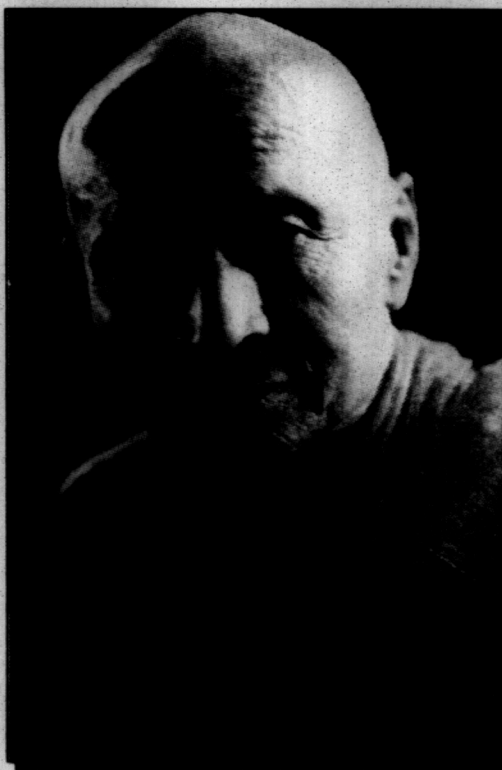
rapidly advance throughout the country, the people will likely return to Buddhism for stability," Wardell says.

"We have to speak of repentance in terms of renouncing allegiance to any other thing (such as spirits or gods) and trusting Christ alone for their salvation," he says. "This offers more hope for the present and future than Buddhism, which appears to have failed the people time and time again."

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions has provided funds to construct an office building, house and guest rooms for Wardell and other personnel who work alongside him.

It also funded vehicles for four new families who have arrived within the past 18 months to minister there, as well as helped provide the salaries that allow them to give their full attention to witness and ministry.

In a land that has been controlled by the devil for hundreds of years, Wardell and fellow workers are laboring to lift the veil of Buddhism so the Khmer can "see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Co. 4:4).



LOST — Buddhism claims the lives, and eternal destinies, of most Cambodians, including this monk at a temple in Phnom Penh. Southern Baptists and Cambodian believers are working hard to help the lost multitudes understand God's love. (BP photo by Charles Ledford)